

# Family Forum ranks Louisiana lawmakers on its issues

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Family Forum, a conservative religious/political activist group, has compiled its annual report declaring 23 state representatives and 12 senators as winners of the “Outstanding Family Advocate Award.”

Lawmakers earn the award by voting 100 percent in agreement with LFF on 10 issues the organization deems important. Some of the issues are the same in the House and Senate but some vary if a specific bill was introduced in one House but failed to move on to the other body.

Another 12 senators and 33 representatives will also be recognized as “Family Advocates” at an Aug. 17 event for supporting the LFF stands on issues.

“We think the votes chosen give a very clear picture of those who supported family values, parental choice in education and limited government at the State Capitol,” said Family Forum President Gene Mills. “We commend these legislators for their principled positions and hard work during the 2012 legislative session.”

Because LFF looks at only conservative issues, almost all of the highly ranked

lawmakers are Republicans.

Rep. Jim Fannin of Jonesboro is the only Democrat among the 23 100-percenters in the House and Rep. Major Thibaut of New Roads is the only Democrat among the 33 House members who scored 80 to 90.

In the Senate, Democratic Sens. Elbert Guillory of Opelousas, David Heitmeier of New Orleans and Rick Ward III of Port Allen and among the 12 senators who scored 100 percent. Two Democratic senators from Norco and Napoleonville scored between 80 and 90.

The LFF website describes Family Forum as “an organization committed to defending faith, freedom and the traditional family in the great state of Louisiana!” Its mission is “To persuasively present biblical principles in the centers of influence on issues affecting the family through research, communication and networking.”

Mills is a registered lobbyist whose credentials allow him to lobby the

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legislative and executive branches of government. He has considerable sway in the Legislature and has influenced the outcome of legislation with a note sent to House or Senate members or a simple thumb up or down signal from the rear or side of the chambers.

During one debate in the Senate, Sen. A.G. Crowe, R-Slidell, one of the 100-percenters, brought action to a halt when he asked "How does the Family Forum stand on this?" The debate was delayed until the next day after Mills was consulted. But some lawmakers, like Rep. James Armes, D-Leesville, don't worry about what the Family Forum thinks of their votes.

"I don't pay any attention to them," Armes said, and his 33 percent rating backs up his statement. "Sometimes they go dabbling into other people's business. I don't let them influence me," he said. "I vote my conscience and the will of my constituents."

Armes is among eight House members and two senators that the LFF deems "hostile." Their grades are in red in the organization's report available at <http://lafamilyforum.us/docs/2012LA-Scorecard-Hres.pdf>.

Others in that group are Democratic Reps. Katrina Jackson of Monroe, Kenny Cox of Mansfield, Jack Montoucet of Crowley, Barbara Norton of Shreveport, Jared Brossett of New Orleans and James Edwards and Patricia Smith of Baton Rouge. In the Senate, Democratic Sens. Yvonne Dorsey-Colomb of Baton Rouge and Ed

Murray and Karen Carter Peterson of New Orleans are deemed "hostile."

House ratings were done on how representatives voted on bills to have the President elected by popular vote instead of the Electoral College (LFF opposed, failed), allowing students to be surveyed on sexual activity and behavior that presents health risks (LFF opposed, failed), allowing a rebate for donations for student vouchers (favored, passed), statewide vouchers (favored, passed), anti-bullying with no mention of sexual preference (favored, passed), urging Congress not to fund Planned Parenthood (favored, passed), ban abortions after 20 weeks (favored, passed), ban abortions by doctors not licensed in Louisiana (favored, passed), deregulating video poker (opposed, failed), prohibit tax credits for pornographic films (favored, passed).

In the Senate, most of the same bills were on the Family Forum watch list but a few other bills were substituted because of the

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ones that failed in the House.

Senators were also graded on legislation that links teacher tenure to performance (LFF favored, passed), requiring women seeking an abortion to “hear the heartbeat” (favored, passed), increasing some state employees’ retirement contributions (favored, failed) and prohibiting government agencies from inserting into bid specifications that there could be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (favored, failed).

Among those earning 100 percent rankings were:

\*Monroe – Reps. Fannin and Jim Morris, R-Monroe, and Sens. Mike Walsworth, R-West Monroe, and Gerald Long, R-Winnfield.

\*Lafayette – Sen. Elbert Guillory, D-Opelousas, Rep. Simone Champagne, R-Erath, Rep. Bob Hensgens, R-Abbeville, Rep. Mike Huval, R-Breaux Bridge, and Rep. Taylor Barras, R-New Iberia.

\*Alexandria – Reps. Lance Harris, R-Alexandria, Frank Howard, R-Many, and Chris Hazel, R-Ball, and Sen. Gerald Long, R-Winnfield.

\*Shreveport – Republican Sens. Barrow Peacock of Shreveport and Robert Adley of Benton and Rep. Henry Burns, R-Haughton.

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